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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7385  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 5953  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3110  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6100  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8118  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 7625  
RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000283

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER EAID AF PK IN

SUBJECT: INDIANS SEEK MODIFICATION OF AFGHAN RECONSTRUCTION POLICY

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶11. (C) Summary: While stressing that a complete overhaul is not necessary, Indian officials and experts on Afghanistan have expressed a clear desire for a change in approach to implementing Afghan reconstruction. India has been a significant contributor to Afghan reconstruction. Visits by Afghan President Hamid Karzai to Delhi and Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee to Kabul in January demonstrate that the two governments have remained focused on their constructive relationship and are eager to expand their cooperation. However, India's role in stabilizing Afghanistan is impeded by several factors, not the least of which is concern over Pakistan's sensitivities. Experts in India see Pakistan as the most significant threat to stabilizing Afghanistan and believe India's contribution to the reconstruction effort will continue to be difficult as long as Pakistan continues to play a negative role. End Summary.

GOI Suggests Change in Approach is Necessary

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¶12. (C) GOI officials have expressed growing concern with the security situation in Afghanistan, which is affecting India's extensive reconstruction projects, and they have been increasingly critical of what they perceive as the Pakistani government's inability or unwillingness to act in the border tribal belt. PolCouns recently met with MEA Joint Secretary for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran Division T.C.A. Raghvan to discuss India's priorities for reconstruction aid in Afghanistan. Raghvan felt that while criticism of aspects of reconstruction was warranted, Afghan reconstruction efforts did not require a complete overhaul.

¶13. (C) Raghvan argued that more focus should be given to the tribal areas and criticized efforts to bring Taliban elements to the negotiating table, advising the focus should be on addressing insecurity and helplessness that has resulted from the Taliban's control. "Bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table had greatly muddied the waters and confused public opinion," he explained, "creating a corrosive sentiment where people now view the system as letting the Taliban get in through the back door." He felt it was important to strengthen the Afghan National Army and police given the deteriorating situation in southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan. Focusing only on strengthening the

central government would not bring stability to Afghanistan, Raghvan explained.

#### Bringing Other Regional Players to the Table

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**¶4.** (C) Indian Afghan hands urge engagement with a wider circle of regional actors, particularly Iran. Dr. Ajai Sahni, Executive Director of the Institute of Conflict Management believes the approach to Afghan reconstruction needs to encompass broader regional cooperation. Sahni suggested that Iran be given a larger role in the effort to stabilize Afghanistan, explaining that routing assistance through Pakistan is in most cases neither secure nor effective. Conceding that the U.S. has self-imposed restrictions on dealing with Iran, Sahni broached the idea of involving India in this strategy.

**¶5.** (C) Naming Pakistan as the most destabilizing factor in the region and the foremost reason why India has not been able to do more to contribute to the Afghan reconstruction effort, Sahni explained that Islamabad would prefer to have an unstable Afghanistan next door as it prevents growth in cross-border Pashtun nationalism. Echoing Sahni's point regarding branching out to influential players, Professor Qamar Agha of Jamia Millia Islamia University suggested the positive potential of involving Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and China.

#### Greater Potential for Assistance, but India Holding Back

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**¶6.** (C) Afghan experts squarely blame Pakistan for limiting the scope of Indian reconstruction assistance. According to Radha Kumar, Director of the Mandela Centre for Peace, Pakistan views India's influence in Afghanistan as a threat to its own interests in the region, and the security concerns of Afghanistan are multiplied by the Indo-Pakistani rivalry. Kumar explained that over the past two years, as India-Afghanistan ties have grown in strength, so have Pakistani fears of being squeezed by its two neighbors. Referring to the criteria for putting together the multinational force in Afghanistan, Kumar remarked that India, ideally placed to join the force due to its considerable humanitarian and peacekeeping experience, is temporarily ruled out because of the hostility between it and Pakistan.

**¶7.** (C) Indranil Banerjee, Executive Director of the SAPRA Foundation, an Indian think tank focusing on South Asia, said the main obstacle India encounters in providing assistance to Afghanistan is the lack of open transport routes through Pakistan. Transport costs would significantly decrease if Pakistan allowed Indian trucks to transit but Pakistan seldom does, leaving India with the next best but more costly option of shipping from India to Iran and then overland to Afghanistan. In the limited instances when India has been granted permission to use Pakistan's land routes, getting the goods across securely was such a concern, Banerjee explains, that often the decision was made to route them through Iran anyway.

#### Opportunity for Greater U.S.-India Cooperation on Afghanistan

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**¶8.** (C) Comment: While India's opposition to engaging for the Taliban is not new, Raghvan signaled that India is looking at new ways to bring greater success to Afghan reconstruction efforts. While Pakistani concerns will always be part of the equation for India's policy on Afghanistan, India's ambivalence regarding the extent to which it is ready to get involved in Afghan reconstruction may be under review in the post-Mumbai environment. As the United States reviews its efforts in Afghanistan, there exists an opportunity to

partner with India in a wide variety of fields. (Note: India's involvement in Afghanistan is broad and touches practically every sector ) telecom, banking, public administration, legislature, transportation, energy, IT, education, health, and aviation ) but is noticeably absent in the security field. End Note.) With no experience in donor coordination, India will wish to remain "independent" in conducting its Afghan reconstruction assistance. In the current environment, however, India appears willing to tacitly acknowledge the United States' ability to influence Kabul and Islamabad, so an opportunity exists to pursue complementary or parallel efforts in numerous sectors in the effort to rebuild Afghanistan. End Comment.

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